

# MOOSE

Headings and Trigger words  
Use this column to write down  
a heading and trigger words to  
summarise each paragraph.

The moose is one of the largest land mammals in North America and is a member of the deer family.

It can be very frightening close up. The male (bull) is larger than the female (cow) and the height of its shoulders can be two metres. It has a long nose and a drooping lip. The front legs are longer than the back legs which give it a humpbacked look. The moose has long, reddish brown or black hair, which is very important for survival during the extremely cold winter. Moose have excellent hearing. Their large ears are able to rotate 180 degrees. Their sense of smell is also very good which means they can find food below deep snow. Their eyesight is poor but they can detect moving objects. The male has massive shovel-shaped antlers which are flat with small prongs projecting from the edges. These are important for attracting a mate and as a sign of dominance when competing with other males at mating time.

Moose are found in Alaska, Canada, and northern parts of America. They prefer to live in forests or wooded areas near lakes and rivers. Their long legs mean they can move about in snow up to 70cm deep in winter. However, if the snow is any deeper than that they get trapped and become easy prey for wolves.

In the mating season rival males will compete for females. They engage in violent battles by placing their antlers against each other and trying to push each other over. The cow has one or two calves, which will feed from her for six months. The calves can browse and follow their mother after three weeks. The young will stay with their mother for a year until a new calf is ready to be born. The young moose is then driven off by the mother to face the dangers of the wilderness by itself. Moose live for an average of 12 years in the wild.

Moose are plant eaters. Most of their time is spent eating as they need 20kg of food per day. They eat plants growing on the forest floor and use their bottom lip to strip leaves from trees. In summer water plants are their main food. They like wallowing in the deep mud along the shore or submerging themselves in water while feeding. Moose are good swimmers. They can dive to six metres in search of plants growing at the bottom of lakes. They also spend a lot of time in the water to escape sucking flies and mosquitoes. Food can be a real problem in winter and is the main threat to their survival.

Most of the year the moose is a silent animal. They do not form herds as other deer do and usually live alone except for mating when they will gather in groups. Mothers are very aggressive and protective of their calves.

A healthy full-grown moose has little to fear from most predators. When a moose charges, it kicks forward with its very large front hooves and have been known to fight off entire wolf packs. Despite the careful attention of the mother to their calves, up to a half of all moose die in their first year from attacks by predators, drowning while trying to swim across lakes, starving to death in winter, or dying from diseases.



Moose can be quite a nuisance to man. They eat crops and young trees, stand on airfields, wander the city streets, and collide with cars and trains. They are hunted for meat and sport but are not considered a threatened or endangered species. In fact, moose populations increase very quickly unless they are limited by predators, hunters, or bad weather.